



February 15, 2000

Mr. Leonard W. Peck, Jr.
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342

OR2000-0545

Dear Mr. Peck:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 132298.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the “department”) received a request for the application, qualifications, and clinical experience of a particular job applicant, as well as a copy of her interview with board members and the names of the board members interviewing her. You seek to withhold only the interview questions and model answers. We presume that you have released the remaining requested information. You argue that the requested information is excepted from required public disclosure by section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the documents at issue.

Section 552.122(b) excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term “test item” in section 552.122(b) includes any standard means by which an individual’s or group’s knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee’s overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122(b) exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122(b) where release of “test items” might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976).

You indicate that the department will use the same questions and preferred answers to evaluate applicants in future interviews and state that the “oral examinations” are “devices by which the applicants’ ‘knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated,’” quoting Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). After reviewing the submitted documents, we believe that all of the questions and their model answers are protected “test items.” They “measure the skill, knowledge, intelligence, capacities, or aptitudes of an individual” and are a “standard means by which an individual’s or group’s knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated.” *Id.*

In summary, the department may withhold the requested interview questions and model answers.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body’s intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.–Austin 1992, no writ).

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia Michels Anderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patricia Michels Anderson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PMA/jc

Ref: ID# 132298

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Donnie L. Jones
Sex Offender Treatment Program
Goree Unit
Huntsville, Texas 77344
(w/o enclosures)